



Centre on Migration, Policy and Society

**Working Paper No. 12,
University of Oxford, 2005**

How far are the
left-behind left behind?
A preliminary study
in rural China

Xiang Biao

WP-05-12

COMPAS does not have a centre view and does not aim to present one. The views expressed in this document are only those of its independent author

Abstract:

While the linkage between migration and development has attracted much academic and policy attention, a key aspect to the linkage, namely those left behind in the community of origin, remains almost untouched. As one of the first academic attempts to provide a systematic overview of this group in China, this paper describes the basic problems faced by them, discusses the institutional causes of the problems, and explores long-term and short-term solutions. The paper first establishes the fact that, although it seems to be a decision made by individuals who migrates and who does not, there are also fundamental institutional factors. The paper then shows that the three main left-behind groups, namely wives, the elderly and children, encounter various problems, but in general their situation is not much worse than those accompanied by family members. Their problems cannot to be attributed to being left behind, instead the fundamental cause is that many rural communities as a whole have been left behind economically and socially. Although migration exacerbates the hardship, stopping migration is certainly not a solution. The paper instead calls for measures to redress the urban-rural divide and to improve public goods provision in rural communities.

Key words: left-behind, migration and development, China

Author: COMPAS - Centre on Migration, Policy and Society, University of Oxford, 58 Banbury Road, Oxford, OX2 6QS, UK. **Email:** biao.xiang@compas.ox.ac.uk

How far are the left-behind left behind? A preliminary study in rural China¹

Zheng Xihua was on the verge of tears when our conversation turned to her children: a 15-year-old daughter and 11-year-old twin sons. Thirty-six years old and from the countryside of the northern part of Liaoning province, northeast China, she works in a car park during the day and in a beauty salon at night in Shenyang, the capital city of Liaoning. Her husband started migrating to work in cities more than 10 years ago. The further away he goes, the less often he visits home, and the less money he sends back. Zheng said he is not her man any more but divorce is not an option for either of them. To meet the ever increasing family expenditure with the growth of their children, Zheng went to south China to work three years ago. When she returned home for the last Chinese New Year after being away for one and a half years, she was dismayed to find that her daughter refused to call her mother and insisted on dropping out from high school to go to work in the city, her two sons were swearing at the elderly next door, and one had a long knife scar on his face, turning his movie-star looks to a gangster appearance. She didn't have the time to check the sons' examination scores (when she asked for the annual report from the school, the sons answered that they had thrown them away). But her father-in-law told her that the teacher had visited to say that one of the sons would be expelled should he continue to fight with schoolmates and fail to turn up for classes. From early 2004, she decided to work in Shenyang where she can go home more frequently. Zheng sighed:

For my life, it's itI take it. The man [husband] is like this. All I am doing now is for the children. But when you are away earning money for them, they learned all the bad things. [But] if I stay home, who is

¹ I thank Ms Lorente Beatriz at the National University of Singapore, and particularly Dr Ali Rogers at Oxford University, for their careful reading and detailed suggestions for revision of an earlier version of this paper. I am also grateful to Ms Emma Newcombe at the University of Oxford for her help with editing and Ms Zhang Na at Shenyang Normal University, China, for her assistance with the References.

going to earn the money? You don't know you should slap them or slap yourself ... I have thought it through now! It is up to themselves. If they learn the rules one day, they grow up properly; otherwise they will just end up as useless like their father or have a bitter fate (*kumin*) like me!²

Millions of Chinese are facing the same hardship and dilemma as Zheng – as left-behind wives or as migrant parents leaving their children behind. According to the latest population census (2000) and other surveys in Beijing and Shanghai, there are 106 million rural-urban migrants in China (National Statistic Bureau of China 2001).³ Although no data are available on the total number of the left-behind, the magnitude is surely substantial. The left-behind constitute the major part of the rural population in many places and the countryside is thus said to be occupied by the “38-61-99 Army”: “38” for the left-behind wives (8 March, Women’s Day), “61” for children (1 June, Children’s Day), and “99” for old people (9 September is the day for the elderly in China). The most difficult issue for a society is perhaps not obvious criminal behaviour such as drug dealing or corruption, but something that is on the one hand economically appealing for the majority of the population, and on the other is regarded as socially problematic. Migration is such a phenomenon. While the economic necessity of migration has been widely recognized, the concerns of the social stress related to migration, particularly those shouldered by the left-behind, also increase.

The sense of ambivalence about migration has become more acute recently in China with two significant developments in policy and public debate on rural-urban migration. First, there has been a dramatic shift in policy discourse and public attitude since late 2002. Migration is no longer regarded

² Interview in Shenyang, Liaoning province, 13 December 2004.

³ The census reported 121.07 million internal migrants as of the year 2000 and among them 88.4 million were rural-urban migrants. The census defines “migrants” as those who lived in a township or district (in big cities) different from where they register their permanent residence for more than half a year. Other surveys conducted in Shanghai and Beijing found that about 20 per cent of migrants in cities stayed less than half a year. Our estimate of the 106 million rural-urban migrants is reached on these bases.

as a problem or even a neutral social issue, but for the first time it is recognised as an important process for social and economic development. In January 2003, the State Council issued its Number 1 Document to urge the improvement in the working condition of migrant workers and to ensure their basic rights. One year later, the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party and the State Council (2004) issued another Number 1 Document on increasing peasants' incomes, for which purpose rural-urban migration is identified as a key measure. Number 1 Documents set the work priority for the entire government machinery throughout the year. Following this, various ministries have launched programmes and allocated huge amounts of resources to facilitate migration, particularly by providing pre-migration training. For instance the Ministry of Agriculture spent RMB250 million, with an additional matching fund of 300 million from various provinces, to train migrant labourers in 2004 (Xinhua News Agency 2004). Although government support and even promotion do not necessarily lead to further rapid increase in the scope of migration, the momentum of the massive movement remains strong.

At the same time, problems faced by the left-behind surface. In April 2004, the Chinese public was shocked and outraged by news from Fuyang municipality of Anhui province, south China: in the space of less than a year (from May 2003 to late April 2004), 171 infants in the municipality suffered from serious malnutrition (locally known as "big-head disease" because of the symptom of big heads) and 13 had died, all because of being fed extremely low-quality milk formula.⁴ Similar low-quality formula was later found across China and they were in fact produced in Beijing, Mongolia, Zhejiang and other places, all far away from Fuyang. Then why did babies in Fuyang suffer the most? Fuyang is a major migrant-sending region (with 1.7 million people working in other places in early 2004, see *Hefei Evening News* 2004) and as a result a large number of left-behind babies had to rely on manmade formula. The fake formula was cheap, thus appealing to the poor

⁴ This was widely reported by many media in China, for example *Anhui Daily*, 21 April 2004.

migrants' families. In most cases the babies were looked after by poorly-educated grandparents, another left-behind population themselves, who did not have enough knowledge to assess the quality of formula and were also slow in sending babies to hospitals, alerting the public and in going to court, even after the problem became clear. Because of the vulnerability to the formula as a result of outmigration, Shanghai municipality made special efforts to block similar products from entering places with large outmigration (XinhuaNet 2004).

These developments urge us to examine again the questions: To what extent can migration serve as a viable measure for development? How can we address the negative consequences? As one of the first academic attempts to provide a systematic overview of the left-behind in rural China, this paper describes the basic problems faced by them, discusses the institutional causes of the problems, and explores long-term and short-term solutions. The paper will first establish the fact that, although who migrates and who stays back seems to be a decision made by individuals, there are fundamental institutional constraints on such decisions. For instance, children and the elderly are left behind partly because, as a result of the household registration system and the place-based public finance system, they are denied access to basic welfare in the city. The paper then reveals that all of the three left-behind groups, namely wives, the elderly and children, do encounter various problems, but existing comparative studies show that in general their situation is not much worse than those accompanied by family members. Thus the problems cannot be attributed to being left behind. Rather, the fundamental point is that many rural communities as a whole have been left behind economically and socially and the communities where the left-behinds live are no longer able to provide any support. Although migration exacerbates the hardship, stopping migration is not a solution. Finally, based on the institutional analysis and observation of grassroots practices, the paper suggests that measures at two levels should be taken. First, the institutions that maintain the urban-rural divide should be removed

or at least modified to enable more migrants to settle down in cities with families. Second, public goods provision in the rural communities must be aggressively improved. In this regard, this paper also calls attention to the limitation of migration as a developmental tool.

This paper is primarily based on a documentary study with highly dispersed information sources including academic publications, news reports and public commentaries. As a supplement, I conducted in-depth interviews with eight migrants and left-behind members in Liaoning province from November 2004 to February 2005. I also draw on information from my earlier long-term research with migrants in China throughout the major part of the 1990s, particularly my work on communities with large out-migrants in Wenzhou area of Zhejiang province, southeast China (Xiang Biao 2005).

Why are the left-behind left behind?

Although it appears to be migrants' practical consideration to leave some family members back home, and, indeed, it is often conceptualized as a rational "household strategy" in academic literature, in China the left-behind population is to a large extent an institutional outcome. China established a special household registered system (known as "*hukou*") in the 1950s in order to prevent the rural population from spontaneously moving to cities and to keep the grain price low to support a high rate of industrialisation (particularly in heavy industries) in cities. Under the *hukou* system, people born in urban area are officially registered as "residents" (*jumin*) and those in rural areas as "peasants" (*nongmin*). "Residents" and "peasants" are thus two distinct categories of social status that entail different rights (for example, "residents" were, in theory, guaranteed waged employment but "peasants" were not). "Peasants" cannot obtain urban *hukou* status unless mandated by the state.⁵ The fact that migrants are supposed to return to the

⁵ For literature on the *hukou* system, see Christiansen 1990; Cheng and Selden 1994; Mallee 1995; Chan and Zhang 1998.

countryside no matter how long and well they have worked in the city is also reflected in the Chinese narrative of migration. Migrants are normally called "peasant workers" (*nongmin'gong* or *min'gong*), and the standard term for the left-behind is "*liushou zhe*", literally meaning "those who stay and hold the fort". While the English phrase of "left-behind" is oriented toward the moving part (migrants) with the connotation that the left-behind could have been brought along during migration, "*liushou*" is exactly the opposite and implies that "*liushou zhe*" are waiting for migrants to return.

Without the status of full urban citizenship, migrants often have to work in the informal sector without secure wages, let alone other social benefits. According to a large survey conducted by the Ministry of Urban and Rural Development, Ministry of Labour and Social Security and the All-China Federation of Trade Unions in nine provinces and municipalities in 2004, only 10-37.5 per cent of the migrant workers in the construction industry signed contracts, varying from province to province (*Zhongguo Jianshe Bao* 2004). Jobs are unstable and migrants often move to different cities each year to search for jobs. Spontaneous migrants thus become a special social category, the "floating population", both physically and institutionally. Without basic economic security, migrants have to be particularly cautious about bringing family members with them.

Corresponding to the *hukou* system, the distribution of political power and responsibility within the Chinese state is strictly defined along lines of place (particularly at the province level). Government departments have no responsibility for the non-*hukou* residents in their jurisdiction. For example, in many towns along China's coast and particularly in the Pearl River delta, migrants outnumber the local population by large margins, but they are very rarely mentioned in local government development plans and reports. All the social and economic development indicators, such as the school enrolment rate and numbers of hospitals for every thousand persons, are calculated on the basis of the size of the permanent population. So is the evaluation of government performance (Xiang Biao 1995). This situation is worsened by

the current public finance system. Take education as an example. As part of the larger agenda of decentralisation of its public finance management, China reformed its educational system in 1985 where different levels of government are responsible for the provision, supervision and financing of education. In cities, the district government (the lowest level of urban government) and municipality government are responsible for primary (age 6-11) and secondary education (12-17), respectively. Budget allocation is strictly based on the assumption that public education is for the *hukou* population only. Although it is self-evident that migrant parents are contributing to the local revenue, local government could argue that serving the migrants would violate the budget regulation.

In response to the lack of the access to formal education, migrants in some big cities set up their own schools from the early 1990s. But until very recently urban authorities refused to grant licenses and even closed down the schools (which they deemed to be “illegal schools”) and regularly expelled the students. One of the earliest primary schools of this kind, the Xingzhi School opened by a migrant Mr Yi Benyao in Beijing with which I was involved at the early stage, had to change its location three times in the first three months in 1997 due to crackdowns by the police (for accounts of the migrants’ schools, see Lu Shaoqing and Zhang Shouli 2001; Han Jialin 2003). Why are local governments against these schools, which are in fact delivering service on government’s behalf? The reason is that, under the place-based governance system, while the local authorities are not responsible for migrants’ welfare, they would be blamed for any accident that occurs in their “territory”, such as the collapse of buildings or food poisoning in the migrants’ schools. In the mid-1990s, the central government recommended a policy principle of “regulation based on location” (*shudi guanli*) that gave local authorities of the receiving place the final say in any incidents involving migrants. But this principle is primarily aimed at preventing accidents to ensure social stability rather than providing services, which create an even

more hostile policy environment for migrants and particularly their dependents.

With a few exceptions, in the current system the only way for migrant children to be admitted to public schools is to pay extra fees, often in the name of "sponsorship" (*zanzhu fei*), normally more than RMB1,000 for the first year and less afterwards. Even when a child manages to enter a school in the city, he/she has to return to the place of origin (as defined by *hukou*) to pass the exams for a higher level of education (e.g. from junior to senior secondary). This is because the entire school enrolment system is also place-based. What migrant students have studied in the destination place can be quite different from the examinations that they would take in the place of origin.

For married women, an unusual policy that deters them from migrating is the mandatory pregnancy check as part of family planning policy. In order to prevent "unplanned births", the family planning authorities in China require all married women to have four pregnancy checks a year. In some places such as Anhui province in south China, test results from destination places are not recognized and women have to return to place of origin for the checks (see Lou Binbin 2004: 118-9).

China established the *hukou* system in conjunction with the command economy which, although appearing to be highly centralized, was in fact managed by cadres at different levels of different jurisdictions. Market-oriented reform starting at the end of the 1970s has dramatically transformed China's economy, but the governance structure has remained very much the same. Thus the mismatch between a unified market and a fragmented system for the management of population, welfare and other social issues stands out as a fundamental characteristic of Chinese society. While citizens can move elsewhere to search for jobs as labourers and purchase basic subsistence as consumers, they cannot settle down anywhere they wish as a social subject. Thus, only those who expect to get jobs and

earn money immediately can afford to migrate, and the family members who need care have to stay back. Apart from policy obstacles, cultural norms and other structural factors are also responsible for the creation of the left-behind groups, as we will see below in the case of the left-behind wives.

Left-behind wives: Feminization of agriculture or “agriculturalisation of females”

Although the proportion of female migrants is increasing, migration in China remains a male-dominated phenomenon (more than 60 per cent being male). This has been theorized by some economists and sociologists as a rational choice of division of labour which is conducive to the growth of household wealth as a whole (Du Yin and Bai Nansheng et al. 1997: 40–56; Cai Fang 2000: 152–159; Si Xiu, cited in Cai Fang 2001: 103). As a result women would benefit from male migration because, apart from the increasing household income, the absence of men means more autonomy and power for them, particularly in agricultural production. Meng (1993; 1995) argues that men’s outmigration makes women’s labour contribution to the household more visible and therefore more appreciated, thus increasing their status. Li Jie (2003) suggests that the outmigration of men led to a redistribution of agricultural resources along gender lines and brought about “rare and valuable” opportunities for “independent development” for women.

A second thought immediately casts doubt on this view. A division of labour whereby women migrate and work in factories while men take up the more labour-demanding agricultural activities is probably more “rational” than the other way around. Feminist scholars argue that it is in fact the deeply ingrained unequal gender relations and patriarchal ideology that keeps women behind. It is well documented that men’s migration is almost independent of marriage, while for women marriage proves to be a determinant. The overwhelming majority of female migrants are unmarried (Research team on Female Rural Migrant Labor, Institute of Sociology of

CASS 2000; Du Yin and Bai Nansheng et al. 1997; see also Tang Mengjun 2004a: 200). One informant explained this to me in this way: "Before the girls are married, they have nothing to do at home, so they go cities to work. After marriage, they have to do the housework for the in-laws. They can't go anymore". Married women do migrate leaving husbands behind, but they do so normally on special occasions, and this often creates great social pressure for the husband (Lou Binbin 2004: 115). Most wives surveyed by the Research Team on Migration and Rural Women's Development in Sichuan and Anhui are in fact unwilling to see their husbands migrate and themselves left behind, and some supported husbands' outmigration precisely because the relationship was in trouble already (Lou Binbin 2004). While the distinction between voluntary versus forced migration has been a central theme in migration studies, a similar distinction for the left-behind should also be recognized.

Feminist researchers have further pointed out that left-behind women became more active in agriculture simply because agriculture has become a marginal economic sector, rather than because women become more powerful (Jin Yihong 1990; Gao Xiaoxian 1994; Fei Juanhong 1994). Gao (1994) has argued that it is more accurate to talk about the "agriculturalisation of females" than the "feminization of agriculture". Jin Yihong (1990) suggests that rural women function as a "secondary reservoir" to the economic development of China. While rural labour as a whole serves as a reservoir for economic growth, rural women contribute to maintaining the rural, thus secondary, reservoir. Based on a literature review, Feng Shizheng (1996) describes a process of "handing down" economic activities from men to women when the activities are undervalued in the market. This argument is confirmed by the quantitative analysis of the Research Team on Migration and Rural Women's Development which finds that 69.1 per cent of left-behind women work in agriculture, and 14.8 per cent are household wives, while almost all the husbands are in industry. As a result, wives' average annual income was RMB 2,060, making up for 27.8 per cent of the

total household income, considerably lower than the husbands' contribution (Tang Mengjun 2004a: 204). The same survey finds that 65.7 per cent of left-behind women experienced hardship, among them 57 per cent identified agricultural production as the primary source of difficulties (Tang Mengjun 2004a: 203).

Unsurprisingly, the political economic and cultural reasons for wives being left behind have not turned being left behind into a chance of empowerment. The majority of the left-behind wives interviewed by the Research Team on Migration and Rural Women's Development were worried about their marriage when the husbands work away and they grow old. But most admitted that they would put up with it if the husband had affairs as long as the husband did not force a divorce (Tang Mengjun 2004b: 26-27). It is also found that the majority of migrant men infected with STD and even HIV hardly had any awareness of protecting their wives and some had already infected them (Lou Binbin 2004: 127). An earlier survey by Zheng Zhenzhen (2001) concludes that husbands' out-migration has no significant impacts on the wives' social attitudes and behaviour. Migrants and the left-behind often cite the notion of "men in charge of external, women in charge of internal" (*nanzhuwai, nvzhunei*) to explain why wives are left behind. The notion used to confine women to the household while men work outside, now confines women to rural community and agriculture. The scope extends, the essence remains the same.

The elderly: Challenges to the household-based care system

More than 10 per cent of the Chinese population were above 60 years of age by 2004, making China an ageing society. Furthermore, the rural population has been ageing at a higher rate than its urban counterpart since 1982, and more than 70 per cent of the elderly now live in the countryside. Compared to wives and children, elderly parents are the most likely to be left behind,

yet they are the least studied. A survey of 252 elderly in three villages in Anhui province (Zhang Xusheng and Wu Zhongyu 2003; Zhang Xusheng 2003) is one of the very few studies on this group. The study identifies emotional loneliness as the most acute problem of the left-behind elderly. Compared to 31.4 per cent of the elderly with all sons working at the home village (the survey does not look at female migrants) who reported to feel lonely "often" or "sometimes", 87.5 per cent of those whose sons had all migrated reported so (Zhang Xusheng 2003: 20). However, puzzlingly, 73.5 per cent of the elderly with all sons away asserted that they were "very" or "fairly" satisfied with their life in general, compared to 65.7 per cent of those who had all their sons around (Zhang Xusheng 2003: 20). This confirms my impression from interviews. In order to make sense of this seemingly contradictory phenomenon and to appreciate its policy implications, we should examine the social setting of the life of the rural elderly.

Outmigration of adult children has not brought about crises for the elderly, first of all because most elderly in rural China have the minimum life security, namely access to land. A large survey conducted by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in 2003 of 1,400 households in Jiangsu, Guangdong, Jilin, Hebei and Gansu provinces indicates that 93.9 per cent of the elderly are allocated land, which can produce enough grain for their own consumption and, in most cases, a surplus (*Chinese Academy of Social Sciences News* 2004). Thus the rural elderly need very limited additional resource for subsistence -- RMB 800 a year in total according to a small-scale survey in southeastern China (Gao Herong and Pu Xinwei 2003: 35).

But it must be stressed that what the rural elderly have forms the very minimal security, and it is precisely because of this that even a marginal increase in cash contribution from the children can lead to more satisfaction. Zhang and Wu's survey has itemized the contribution from migrated sons and those who stayed back (Figure I):

Figure 1: Average value of sons' contribution to the elderly in kind and cash (RMB)

	Grain	Fuel	Cooking Oil	Gifts	Medical care	Cash	Total
Households with all sons around	230.00	31.43	13.46	98.86	333.71	224.57	932.06
Households with all sons migrated	153.46	14.59	7.44	136.52	470.23	649.9	1,427.30

Zhang Xusheng and Wu Zhongyu 2003: 32.

Parents with all sons away receive RMB500 more a year than those whose sons were all around. Migrant sons contribute considerably less in subsistence (e.g. grain and fuel) but much more in gifts, medical care and cash. Since most left-behind parents can raise enough grain for themselves but need cash for medical care and other commodities, it is reasonable to assume that migration has largely increased the welfare of the left-behind elderly.

Another reason for the relatively minor problems faced by the left-behind elderly is that they are relatively young. Since the majority of the migrant labourers are below the age of 39, the left-behind are mostly below 69 (Zhang Xusheng 2003). There is also a popular perception that only the urban elderly have the problem of long-term illness that needs intensive care while rural people, due to their physical strength and the lack of life-saving medical equipment in the hospitals that they can afford, normally die fairly quickly once a serious health problem occurs.

Although outmigration has not brought serious problems, potentially it presents challenge to the current household-based rural elderly care system. The Chinese government had experimented with various measures to provide more "socialized" (i.e., beyond household) security to the rural elderly. But from the very beginning the government established the principle that rural elderly care would be "based on individual contribution, supplemented by

collective [community] fund, supported by government policies”, which clearly frees the government from any financial commitment.⁶ The State Council approved the Basic Design of County-level Insurance Scheme for Rural Elderly in 1992, the scheme in which peasants deposit cash every year and receive a pension from the age of 60. A pilot scheme along these lines was carried out in Yantai municipality of Shandong province. Peasants there paid RMB 48 a year in 1991 (which was increased to RMB 135 in 2002) to the county-level pension fund, sometimes matched by the village fund. But the experiment was not successful, mainly due to the lack of matching funds from communities, and a participant is now receiving an average of RMB 90 a year as pension, far less than is sufficient for security (Li Xian et al. 2004). In Kunming municipality of Yunnan province, similar schemes were put in place in the 1990s. But since the amount of deposit is small and the bank interest rate has been decreasing over the last few years, elderly peasants are now receiving as little as RMB2.2 a month (Tang Zhilan 2003: 85). Nationwide, the number of participants in the rural pension scheme dropped from 80.2 million in 1998 at its peak to 54.6 million in 2002 (Yang Yinan and Li Qiuxiang 2003; Li Xian 2004 et al.). By the end of 2003, 1,870 counties had experimented with social insurance for the elderly with 54.3 million participants and 19.8 million receiving insurance (State Council Press Office 2004), out of more than 800 million rural residents.

An alternative measure to social insurance is elderly care centres. Government- or community-run care centres (*jinglaoyuan*)⁷ are normally in a very bad shape due to the serious lack of funds; self-financing care centres have turned out to be too expensive for most peasants. For example, a care

⁶ An exception to this is a pilot scheme that grants no less than RMB 600 a month for an elderly person who has only one child or two daughters from the date when he/she reaches the age of 60 from 2004. This is aimed at encouraging a low birth rate in rural communities. The fund is shared by the central government and local government.

⁷ Another community-based elderly care practice is the “five guarantees households” (*wubao hu*) scheme which guarantees rural elderly or minors who have lost the ability to work and other source for living with accommodation, food, clothing, medical care and funeral or education (for orphan minors). The scheme covers only a very small part of the rural population. In the survey conducted by Zhang, about 5 per cent of the migrants ceased connections with the parents both economically and socially, and some of the elderly have applied to join the *wubao hu* scheme (Zhang Xusheng 2003: 21).

centre in Sichuan province, southwestern China, charges RMB 3,600 a year for accommodation and another 3,000 for food. The Jiu'an Apartment for the Elderly in Zhejiang provides free accommodation, but only after one pays a deposit of RMB 60,000-80,000 and an additional RMB3,000 for food per year (Gao Herong and Pu Xinwei 2003: 36). They are far too costly given that the per capita income of peasants was merely RMB 2,936 for 2004, after a 6.8 per cent increase from the previous year.

Acknowledging these difficulties, the central government has basically given up on a large socialized care system for the elderly. In 1999 the central government decided not to expand the rural elderly insurance scheme (Gao Herong and Pu Xinwei 2003: 36), and in 2002 it emphasized again that households should take primary responsibility for rural elderly care. To reinforce the household-based elderly care practice, the government has encouraged practices that are novel elsewhere but are common across China, such as selecting model families (*wuhao* family literally meaning "five-good" family) in villages and more importantly encouraging adult children and the parents to sign formal agreements as the legal basis for care provision. With the agreements, the parents can sue children for negligence in care.

The household-based care practice will of course be challenged by the long-time absence of migrant adult children. But challenges do not come from migration alone. The fact that migrants' parents are not much worse off than others may only reflect an even more worrying reality, namely the difficulties about the care system as a whole. According to Mrs Guo, a 54-year-old farmer in a rural suburb of Fushun whom I interviewed, migration has so far affected the left-behind elderly marginally mainly because neither the left-behind nor the others are adequately looked after:

We used to look after our parents and in-laws when we were young. Anything good would be saved for them. Now, when we get old, the younger ones want freedom. They don't like living with you! [...] It is

no better to live together [with children] nowadays. The sons, daughter-in-laws fought everyday next door. The younger son now moved and never came back again. [Compared to that] it's better to live separately. ... What's the difference? They go out or stay home, the same for me.⁸

The household-based approach for elderly care may also have negative impacts on gender relations. As we have seen earlier, wives are left behind often because they are assigned – not only culturally but also legally – the task to stay home to look after the elderly.

Nevertheless, migrants and left-behind elderly have come up with some measures to address their problems, particularly by seeking “commodified socialized services” in the village. For instance it has become increasingly common that the left-behind elderly hire fellow villagers to provide services either on an *ad hoc* or a regular basis by using remittances from their adult children. Although one can easily expect neighbours to lend a hand for free, the elderly prefer paying them to simplify the relationship (Zhang Xusheng 2003). A common arrangement for elderly care in China has been the rotation of the elderly among different sons. For instance, if an old couple has three sons, they would stay with each son for four months a year. In the case of migration, the migrant son would pay a certain amount of money, normally RMB 500-1000 a month according to my field research in the northeast and southeast China, to “buy out” their duty. They often pay the money to the economically least well-off brother who also stays back home to look after the parents. In rural places close to towns, groceries can be delivered free as long as one has a telephone. The development of commodified socialized services has also been facilitated by rural-rural migration. In the villages where I did my field work in southeast China, peasants from nearby mountainous and poorer areas constitute the majority of the agricultural labourers and also care givers to the elderly.

⁸ Interview in Fushun, Liaoning province, 29 December 2004.

The children: Left behind by whom?

A news report in a prominent Chinese national daily stated that as a “conservative” estimate at least 10 million children are either looked after by their mothers alone or by grandparents as a result of parents’ migration (Li Chenxu 2003). According to estimates by local officials in a major outmigration county of Anhui province, every 1,000 migrants leave 125-250 children (Li Lijin 2004: 18). If this estimate is valid and applicable nationwide, there would be 13 – 26 million children left behind. A survey (Qian Meifu 2004) of a primary school in Tian Chang city, Anhui province finds that 280 students out of the total of 479 had parents away from home, making 58.5 per cent, and 37.2 per cent of all the students have both parents away from home.

Understandably children have attracted the most attention as a left-behind population. News reports about young girls being raped and children dying in accidents while the parents are away have raised public concern. The discourse of familism, which has been articulated and popularised recently with the growth of the middle class and the anxiety resulting from dramatic social transformation in urban China, tends to see it a sin to leave one’s children behind. A researcher at the Mother Education Institute, East China Communications University, pronounced that: “mother’s smile forms the best surrounding for the growth of children. Thus mothers have no excuse whatsoever to leave children behind... otherwise [the regret] would be a millstone on your neck all your life” (cited in Wang Yanbo and Wu Xinlin 2003: 9) (one wonders why the father’s neck is free?). While it is easy to impose moral millstones on mothers, we need to examine empirically the situation of the left-behind children and what we can do.

Surveys of the left-behind children have portrayed a fairly grim picture. A study of 250 junior high school students with the experience of being left behind for more than 6 months in Jichun county, Hubei province, for example,

finds that more than half of them had difficulties in adapting to the left-behind life, 16.6 per cent had the feeling of being abandoned, 12.3 per cent had the problem of expressing difficulties or obtaining help, and 6.5 per cent regarded being left behind anguishing (Liang Sheng 2004: 26). The Sichuan Agricultural Survey Team investigated 1,184 left-behind children in Da County in 2003 and found that 47 per cent of the students performed poorly, 41 per cent medium-low and only 12 per cent better than average (Zhao Huanxin 2004). The survey by the Women's Federation of Meishan city, Sichuan province in 2004 is probably one of the largest scale of this kind to date, with a sample of nearly 12,000 students in 21 rural schools including 51.2 per cent of the all students being left-behind. The report suggests that the left-behind have high drop-out rates, poor academic performance, and problems in socialization and psychological development, although the concepts in the paper are poorly defined and the description unclear (Women's Federation of Meishan municipality, Sichuan province and Office of the Committee for the Work of Women and Children of Meishan municipality, Sichuan province 2004).

Qualitative observations consistently suggest that left-behind children often developed two extremes of symptoms. They became either withdrawn or excessively aggressive (Li Lijin 2004: 18; Zhao Huanxin 2004; Qian Meifu 2004). It is commonly attributed to the fact that the grandparents who are looking after the children either spoil the children or fail to give enough emotional care (e.g. Zhao Huanxin 2004; Qian Meifu 2004). According to Li Quanmian's (2004: 34) survey in six villages in Jiangxi province in 2003, 85 per cent of the elderly reported difficulties in looking after grandchildren, mainly due to their physical weakness and low education level.

But these researches focus only on the left-behind children, without comparing them with those who live with parents. Comparative studies however find that the differences between the two groups are marginal. According to a highly technical psychological analysis, the psychological status of the left-behind children is less healthy than other children, but only

very marginally (Huang Ailin 2004: 351, 353). The research conducted by Zhu Kerong, Li Chunjin and Zhou Shuqin (2002) on the educational achievement of the left-behind children and others in Jiangxi, Hunan and Henan provinces, concludes that in both the behavioural pattern of study (e.g. school attendance) and outcomes (primarily measured by examination scores), there is no significant difference. The authors attribute this to the general negligence of most rural parents towards children's education, regardless of whether they are home or away. Despite the general impression that left-behind children are more likely to drop out from school, the survey done by Jiang Zhongyi and Fen He (2002, cited in Wang Dewen 2003) finds that parents' migration does not appear to be a factor – at least not an independent one – in affecting school children's withdrawal.

Thus, similar to the situation of the elderly, the left-behind children face various problems, but they are not evidently worse than those accompanied by parents. Research on the social development of children in different parts of Shandong province, eastern China (Shandong Province Women's Federation, Shandong Province Association for Family Education, and Department of Psychology of Shandong Normal University 2004; cited in Yang Ke and Wang Ying 2004: 29) indicates that the percentage of children with psychological and behavioural problems in city, county seat and countryside are 8.11, 7.18 and 19.18 respectively. In other words, rural children are more than twice as likely to have psychological and behavioural problems as their urban counterparts. The rural-urban divide is thus far more significant than the differences between the left-behind and the accompanied.

The fact that rural children as a whole group are left behind again has roots in the institutional set-up, and a key to it is the problematic relationship between individual, community (represented by villagers' committee) and the state in the provision of basic education. As mentioned in the earlier part of the paper, basic education in China has been mainly the responsibility of government below the provincial level. In the countryside, villagers'

committee, township and county governments are respectively responsible for the primary, junior-secondary (year 12-14) and senior-secondary (15-18) education. The township was the major investor in education, but its very limited financial capacity has led to the perennial under-funding of schools. The situation has become worse since 1994 when China introduced a new taxation system with the objective of enlarging the revenue at the central level. Under the new financial framework, different levels of government form a relation of upward concentration of revenues, leaving the township as the weakest. A widely cited figure is that by the end of the 1990s about 80 per cent of townships in China could not pay salaries to school teachers on time. In some townships, the total government revenue is less than one third of all the teachers' salaries that they are supposed to pay as designated by the central government. Recognizing this reality, from June 2001 the central government decided that the county government should be responsible for guaranteeing the funding for basic education. This alleviated such problems as teachers' backwage, but certainly has not brought about substantial improvement in rural education.

Apart from the structure of "funding by different levels, managing by different levels" (*fenji fuze, fenji guanli*), the 1986 educational reform scheme also set the principle of mobilizing investments for education from diverse sources outside the government budget. In rural places, village schools rely heavily on levies paid by villagers, which amounts to a huge burden for peasants. The staffing of schools is a particularly telling aspect to this. Unlike in the city where almost all the teachers are state employees and enjoy guaranteed salaries and welfare benefits such as pensions, a substantial part of the teachers in the rural places were so-called "private teachers" (*minban jiaoshi*). They were hired by the school or village, and were paid by the village or township or county in some cases. They did not have job security and did not enjoy any welfare benefits. A simple distinction between the "private teachers" and full-time state teachers is that while the latter have urban *hukou*, the former are rural, and they are thus also

referred to as “peasant teachers” because they are “peasants” by legal status. The Ministry of Education claims that the category of “private teachers” is part of history by 2000 because these teachers will either be disqualified from teaching or they will be upgraded to full-time state teachers. But the budget of local government in some places simply cannot cover the new full-time teachers and thus rural schools turn to “substitute teachers” who are basically the same as “private teachers”. As of 2001, 705,000 substitute teachers were hired by primary schools and junior secondary schools nationwide, among them 82.3 per cent in rural schools (Wang Dewen 2003: 8). The salary for substitute teachers is RMB 300 per month with a maximum of 500 including various bonus.

Apart from financial responsibility, villagers’ communities are also obliged to maintain school buildings (particularly to repair old buildings to ensure safety) and improve other teaching facilities, increase teachers’ income, defend schools’ interest, and ensure school enrollment rate. In sum, in the rural education system to date the central government has set policy but with only minimum financial commitment. Farmers ultimately shoulder most of the cost, and the community takes up the day-to-day management.⁹

As a result of this institutional arrangement, rural education is vulnerable to the negative consequences of migration. First, at the macro level, since rural education is financed by the rural community rather than a nationwide scheme, and educated farmers are more likely to migrate to cities, the rural investment in education has become a subsidy to the urban sector. Second, rural school teachers’ job insecurity and low pay – an inevitable outcome as a result of the dependence on community funds – have in fact turned many rural teachers into migrants, with the latest tide in 2003. In order to relieve

⁹ The Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao pledged in his Work Report for the Third Plenary of the Tenth National People’s Congress (Beijing, 5 March 2005) that the Chinese government will exempt students from low-income families in the national priority counties for poverty alleviation from fees for books and other expenditures. By 2007 the plan should be applied nationwide. But by the time of my research it is unclear how the plan will be implemented particularly in terms of financing.

peasants' financial burden, the central government ordered a dramatic cut of peasants' levies in early 2003, including the part originally for basic education. Although the reduction of levy is supposed to be compensated by the government budget, in reality it is often unmet, and teachers' salaries in some places were cut by a third or a half. In Jichun county of Hubei province, for example, as many as 800 teachers quit their jobs due to the reduction of pay in early 2003. Among them, 77 were from village primary schools, nearly one third of the total (Jiang Xiaofeng 2003). Finally, the outmigration of the most educated and capable members of the rural community -- the "brain drain" from the countryside -- has further weakened the social capacity of the villages to mobilize resources for education. Basic education is a typical public good that cannot be delivered effectively without well-developed public institutions, and this is why migrants' remittances contribute to rural education only marginally, if at all. In sum, the left-behind children are left behind not only by parents, but also by teachers, by other capable community members, and ultimately by the basic policy design.

The negative social consequences of migration are far from being confined to education alone. A great number of villages in China have become "shell villages" (*kongke cun*). They are "shell villages" because they do not have any productive public assets and also because outmigration has emptied them of able labourers. For example, Jianli county of Hubei province has more than 200,000 labourers working elsewhere. As a result more than 400,000 *mu* (65,880 acres) of land, or 24.2 per cent of the total, is left uncultivated. Due to low productivity, the village could not to pay agricultural tax and other levies and had to take out loans to fulfill duties. Another village in Hubei province with half of its population working as migrants was in debt amounting to more than RMB 2 million in the early 2000s for which the village had to pay RMB 180,000 as interest every year. Without a proper institutional set-up that is friendly to the overall development of the rural communities, migration can leave the entire countryside further behind.

Discussion and policy implications

Unlike what is usually assumed, being left behind in China is not only a matter of a “practical” consideration of migrants and their family members, but is related to fundamental institutional arrangements and unequal social relations. These institutional arrangements also explain the problems faced by the left-behind, and the marginal difference between them and those accompanied by family members in rural communities in welfare status. This paper has demonstrated that far more important than being left behind physically by migrant parents or children, rural communities as a whole have been left behind economically and socially.

The current development paradigm of China is highly urban-biased. While the city is the primary driving force as well as beneficiary of economic growth, the rural community has to shoulder most of the costs for social and human development such as education and social security. Migration as a process whereby the labour force that is produced in the rural community is transferred to the city may thus exacerbate the disparity. But it must be pointed out that discouraging migration would not be an option. Not only is this unfeasible, but under the current institutional arrangement retaining people at home would hardly increase living standards. As one left-behind mother and wife (both her husband and son migrated) in rural Shenyang commented: it is better to be apart to earn more money than to stay together to be poor.

What should and can we do? Measures should be taken on both the urban and rural sides in order to improve the welfare of the left-behind and to better link migration and development. On the urban side, policies that perpetuate the rural-urban divide must be amended or removed. More peasants and their families must be allowed to settle in cities with the equal entitlement as other urban residents. Thus rural family members, particularly

children, do not have to be left behind on a long-term basis.¹⁰ On the rural side, measures can be explored in three aspects. First, more attention can be paid to the emerging community-based market for services which have been driven by migrant remittances and the demand from the left-behind. Apart from elderly care, it has also become increasingly common for migrants to leave their children with other community members, particularly school teachers, on a commercial basis. A school teacher in a village with a large number of out-migrants can have 40 students living in her/his house. In Wenzhou area, southeastern China, which is well-known for its outmigrant traders, the practice is well-established and is commonly referred to as “to raise piggies”. Commodified service provision in rural communities is very new, and more research and policy intervention are needed to increase economic efficiency and to avoid socially undesirable outcomes.

Second, “social capital” can be enriched among the left-behind. For example left-behind wives in some communities have formed mutual-aid groups in the high season of agriculture. Women’s organizations can certainly strengthen these spontaneous groups. It has also been documented that socializing with peer groups is the primary means the left-behind elderly use to address their emotional loneliness (Zhang Xusheng 2003). There was a well-established system where every village is supposed to have an association of the elderly under the leadership of the township Committee for the Elderly. But, in many places, the system has not been active lately and this can be revived.

Finally, however, we must recognize that remittances and “social capital”, which have gained much popularity in academic and policy making circles recently, fall well short on their own in generating substantial development and increasing the welfare of the left-behind. Formal and more powerful

¹⁰ On 1 October 2001, the Chinese government officially announced its intention to relax the *hukou* system. As a result, 20,000 smaller towns and cities across the country can now issue an urban *hukou* to migrants provided they can show proof of having a legitimate address and stable source of income at the place of destination. But for the overwhelming majority of migrant workers, *hukou* remains a formidable obstacle if they want to have other family members live with them in the city.

means of resource redistribution, particularly through state fiscal system, are essential. One does not need to be a Marxist to appreciate the fact that the major part of the value created by migrant labourers remains in the urban sector. It is thus literally out of the question that migration can redress the urban-rural inequality through remittances. Furthermore, as this paper illustrates, the lack of the provision of rural public goods constitutes the immediate cause for various problems of the left-behind and others, and the funding system for national welfare is responsible for this. Without substantially reformulating the overall finance system, the vicious cycle – whereby migration drains resources away from the rural community and the left-behind are left further behind – will not be reversed. We want people to stay home or migrate because they choose to rather than they have to. We want a situation where staying back and migrating are both conducive to the development of the community of origin. This can be achieved only when a poor-, rural-friendly institutional setting is put in place.

References

- Anhui Daily*. 21 April 2004. Aihui places special attention to the Fuyang formula accident, instructed twice for a thorough investigation (Aihui gaodu zhongshi fuyang naifen shijian, liangci pishi checha weilie naifen).
- Cai Fang (ed.) 2001. *Zhongguo Renkou Liudong Fangshi yu Tujin (Patterns and Paths of Chinese Population Mobility)*. Beijing: Shehui Kexue Wenxian Chubanshe (Social Science Documentation Publisher)
- Cai Fang. 2000. *Zhongguo Liudong Renkou Wenti (Issues of Floating Population in China)*. Zhengzhou: Henan Renmin Chubanshe (Henan People's Publisher).
- Chan, K.W. and Zhang, L. 1998. "The Hukou system and rural-urban migration in China: Processes and changes". *The Center for Studies in Demography and Ecology Working Paper*, University of Washington.
- Cheng, T.J. and Selden, M. 1994. "The origins and social consequences of

- China's *hukou* system", *China Quarterly*. 139: 644-668.
- Chinese Academy of Social Sciences News*. 2004. "Nongcun yanglao baoxian: shi butong qunti caiqu duozhong xingshi" (Social security for rural elderly: adopting different models for different groups). 3 September.
- Christiansen, F. 1990. "Social division and peasant mobility in mainland China: The implications of hu-kou system", *Issues and Studie.*, 26 (4): 78-91.
- Du Yin and Bai Nansheng et al. 1997. *Zouchu Xiangcun: Zhongguo Nongcun Laodongli Liudong Shizheng Yanjiu (Leaving Villages: Empirical Research on the Mobility of Rural Labour Force in China.)*, Beijing: Jingji Kexue Chubanshe (Economic Science Press).
- Fei Juanhong. 1994. "Woguo nongcun gaige yu liangxing laodong fen'gong" (Chinese rural reform and gender-based division of labour). *Shehuixue Yanjiu* (Sociology Research). Issue. 2.
- Feng Shizheng. 1996. "Chengxiang liudong renkou dui qi nongcun laiyuandi di yingxiang" (The impacts of rural-urban migration on rural places of origin). *Guowai Shehuixue* (Foreign Sociology). Issue 3.
- Gao Herong and Pu Xinwei. 2003. "Lun dangqian woguo nongcun jiating yanglao mianlin de xin wenti jiqi duice" (On the new problems of the rural household elderly care and policy options). *Xibei Renkou* (Northwest Population) 3 (93): 34-36.
- Gao Xiaoxian. 1994. "Dangdai Zhongguo nongcun laodongli zhuanji nongye nvxinghua qushi" (Rural labour transfer and the feminization of agriculture). *Shehuixue Yanjiu* (Sociology Research). Issue 2: 83-90.
- Han Jialin. 2003. "A study of the education issue of urban marginal groups" (Chengshi bianyuan qunti jiaoyu wenti yanjiu). In Li Peilin (ed.), *Nongmingong, Zhongguo Jincheng Nongmingong de Jingji Shehui Fenxi (Peasant Workers: Economic and Social Analysis of Peasant Workers in the City)*, *Shehui Kexue Wenxian Chubanshe* (Social Sciences Documentation Publishing House): 206-226.
- Hefei Evening News*. 2004. "Fuyang: Waichu wugongzhe da yi bai qishi wan" (Fuyang: outmigrant workers reach 1.7 million). 29 March.
- Huang Ailin. 2004. "'Liushouhai' xinli jiankang shuiping fenxi" (An analysis of

- the health level of the psychological status of “left-behind kids”). *Zhongguo Xinli Weisheng Zazhi* (Chinese Journal of Psychological Health). Vol. 18 No. 5: 351-353.
- Jiang Xiaofeng. 2003. “Pingkun diqu xiangcun jiaoshi weihe daliang liushi” (Why poor areas lose large numbers of rural teachers). *Reform of China* (Zhongguo Gaige), rural version. Issue 5: 24-25.
- Jin Yihong. 1990. “Zhongguo nongcun funv feinonghua zhuan yi de zhihouxing yanjiu” (A study on the women’s lag-behind in labour non-agriculturalisation) *Funv Yanjiu* (Women Studies) Issue 5. pages missing.
- Li Chenxu. 2003. “Nongcun ‘liushou ertong’ jidai juejue” (Left-behind rural children need urgent solutions). *Guangming Ribao* (Light Daily) 7 November.
- Li Lijin. 2004. “San nvtong chzou yinfa de shehui youlv” (Social concerns raised the accident of three young girls’ abandoning home). *Zhongguo Minzu Jiaoyu* (Education for Ethnic Minorities in China) Issue 5: 16-18.
- Li Jie. 2003. “Shilun nongcun shequ zhong liushou nvxing shenghuo fangshi de zhuanbian” (An exploratory discussion on the change in the life style of the left-behind rural women). *Shanxi Qingnian Guanli Ganbu Xueyuan Xuebao* (Journal of Shanxi College for Youth Administrators). Vol. 16, No. 2: 38-40.
- Li Quanmian. 2004. contribution to “Jujiao ‘386199’ xianxiang, guanzhu nongcun liushou jiaoting” (Focus on the “386199” phenomena and care for left-behind families in countryside). *Renkou Yanjiu* (Population Research) Vol. 128 , No 14: 25 – 36.
- Li Xian et al. 2004. “Nongcun Shehui yanglao Baoxian zhidu kunjing de guanca he sikao” (Observation and thoughts on the dilemma faced by the rural pension system). *Zhongguo Shehui Baozhang* (Chinese Social Security). No 9: 20-21.
- Liang Sheng. 2004. “Guanzhu nongcun ‘liushou zonghe zheng’” (Pay attention to the “left-behind symptoms”). *Nongcun Shidian* (Rural Perspective). Issue 8: 26.
- Lou Binbin. 2004. “Zhangfu waichu dui funv de yingxiang” (Impacts of

- husbands' migration on women). In Zheng Zhenzhen and Xie Zhengmin eds. *Renkou Liudong yu Nongcun Funv Fazhan* (Migration and the Development of Rural Women). Beijing: Zongguo Shehui Kexue Chubanshe (Chinese Social Science Academic Press): 114-28.
- Lu Shaoqing and Zhang Shouli. 2001. "Chengxiang chabie xia de liudong ertong jiaoyu" (Child education in the context of rural-urban divide). *Zhanlue yu Guanli* (Strategy and Management), Issue 3: 95-108.
- Mallee, H. 1995. "China's household registration system under reform". *Development and Change*. 26: 1-29.
- Meng Xianfan. 1993. "Nongcun laodongli zhuan yi zhong de zhongguo nongcun funv" (Chinese rural women in the rural labour transfer). *Shehui Kexue Zhanxian* (Social Science Frontier) Issue 4: 147—154
- Meng Xianfan. 1995. *Gaige Dacha Zhong de Zhongguo Nvxing* (Chinese Women in the Waves of Reform). *Zhongguo Shehui Kexue Chubanshe* (Chinese Social Science Academic Press).
- National Statistic Bureau of China. 2001. "2000 nian zhongguo nongcun liudong renkou xin tezhen g" (New characteristics of rural floating population in China in 2000). *Zhongguo Guoxing Guoli* (Chinese National Situation and National Power). Issue 9: 18—20.
- Qian Meifu. 2004. "Nongcun liushou haizi de jiaoyu wenti buku hushi" (Education of left-behind children not allowed to be neglected). *Renmin Zhengxie Bao* (People's Political Consultation News). 1 December.
- Research team on Female Rural Migrant Labor, Institute of Sociology of CASS. 2000. *Nongmin Liudong yu Xingbie* (Peasants' Mobility and Gender). Zhengzhou: Zhongyuan Nongmin Chubanshe (Central China Peasants' Publishing House).
- Shandong Province Women's Federation, Shandong Province Association for Family Education and Department of Psychology of Shandong Normal University. 2004. "A comparative study on the social development of family and children in economically developed and underdeveloped regions in Shandong province" (Shandong jingji fada yu qian fada diqu jiating yu ertong shehuixing fazhan de bijiao yanjiu). Cited in Yang Ke

- and Wang Ying. 2004. contribution to “Jujiao ‘386199’ xianxiang, guanzhu nongcun liushou jiaoting” (Focus on the “386199” phenomena and care for left-behind families in countryside). *Renkou Yanjiu* (Population Research) Vol. 128 , No 14: 25 – 36.
- State Council Press Office (People’s Republic of China). 2004. *Zhongguo de Shehui Baozhang Zhuangkuang he Zhengce* (The Situation of Social Security and Policies of China). Beijing: State Council Press Office. September.
- State Council. 2003. “Guanyu zuohao nongmin jincheng wugong jiuye guanli he fuwu gongzuo de zhongzhi” (Notification on improving the work of managing and providing services to peasants who move to cities for work).
- Tang Mengjun. 2004a. “Xianxi ‘Liushou qizi’ xianxiang” (A preliminary analysis of the left-behind wives). In Zheng Zhenzhen and Xie Zhengmin eds. *Renkou Liudong yu Nongcun Funv Fazhan (Migration and the Development of Rural Women)*. Beijing: Zhongguo Shehui Kexue Chubanshe (Chinese Social Science Academic Press): 200-206.
- Tang Mengjun. 2004b. contribution to “Jujiao ‘386199’ xianxiang, guanzhu nongcun liushou jiaoting” (Focus on the “386199” phenomena and care for left-behind families in countryside). *Renkou Yanjiu* (Population Research) Vol. 128, No 14: 25 – 36.
- Tang Zhilan. 2003. “The new situation and policy response of pension system for the rural elderly” (Nongcun shehui yanglao baozhang mianlin de xin xingshi ji duice). *Frontier of Thought* (Sixiang Zhanxian) 29 (5): 82-87.
- Wang Dewen. 2003. China’s Rural Compulsory Education: Current Situation, Problems and Policy Alternatives. Working paper series No. 36, Beijing: Institute of Population and Labor Economics, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.
- Wang Yanbo and Wu Xinlin. 2003. “Nongcun ‘liushouhai’ xianxiang ge’an diaocha baogao” (A case study of the phenomena of rural left-behind kids) *Exploration in Youth Studies* (Qingnian Tansuo). Issue 4: 7-10.

- Women's Federation of Meishan municipality, Sichuan province and Office of the Committee for the Work of Women and Children of Meishan municipality, Sichuan province. 2004. "Nongcun 'liushou xuesheng' diaocha yu sikao" (Investigation and analysis on rural left-behind students). *Zhongguo Fuyun* (Chinese Women's Movement). Issue 10: 35-36.
- Xiang Biao. 1995. *Min'gong Wenti yu Chengshi Shehui Chengzhang* (Peasant Workers and Urban Development: A Case Study of Dongguan City, Pearl River Delta). Department of Sociology, Peking University.
- Xiang Biao. 2005. *Transcending Boundaries*. Translated by Jim Weldon based on *Kuayue Bianjie de Shequ* (Beijing: Three-joints Books 2000). Brill Academic Publisher.
- Xinhua News Agency. 2004. "Qian san jidu peixun yiqian wuban wan min'gong" (1.5 million rural labourers trained in the first three quarters). Shenyang. 25 October.
- XinhuaNet. 2004. "Shanghai chahuo luezhi naifeng, fang qi jinru nongcun ji mingong judi shichang" (Shanghai found low-quality milk and stops it from spreading to rural area and concentration areas of migrant workers). 23 April
- Yang Yinan and Li Qiuxiang. 2003. "Nongcun shehui yanglao baoxian fazhan huanman de shechengci yuanyin tanxi (An exploratory analysis of the deep causes for the slow progress of the development of the pension for the rural elderly)". *Shehui Baoxian Yanjiu* (Study of Social Insurance). No.8.
- Zhang Xusheng and Wu Zhongyu. 2003. "Nongcun laodongli waich jiuye dui laoren jingji zhichi de yingxiang" (The impacts of outmigration of rural labourers for work on the economic support for the elderly). *Nanfang Renkou* (South China Population). No. 2 Vol. 18: 30-34.
- Zhang Xusheng. 2003. "Nongcun shequ fazhan zhong de laoren zhaogu" (Elderly care in the development of rural communities). *Changsha Minzheng Zhiye Jishu Xueyuan Xuebao* (Journal of Changsha Social Work College). No.4 Vol.10: 17-21.

- Zhao Huanxin. 2004. "Guanzhu nongcun 'liushou' zinv" (Pay attention to the left behind children in the countryside). *People's Daily*, 4 February.
- Zheng Zhenzhen. 2001. "Guanyu renkou liudong dui nongcun funv yingxiang de yanjiu" (A study on the impacts of migration on rural women). *Funv Yanjiu Luncong* (Collections of Women Studies). Issue 6: 38-41.
- Zhonggong Zhongyang, Guowuyuan (Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party and State Council). 2004. "Guanyu cujin nongmin zengjia shouru ruogan zhengce de yijian" (Suggestions on various policy to increase peasants' incomes).
- Zhongguo Jianshe Bao* (Chinese Construction News). 2004. "Weile nongmin'gong de hefa quanyi" (For the sake of migrant workers' legal rights). 7 December.
- Zhu Kerong, Li Chunjin and Zhou Shuqin. 2002. "Nongcun 'liushou zinv' xuexi zhuangkuang fenxi yu jianyi" (Analysis and suggestion on the academic performance of the left-behind children) *Jiaoyu Kexue* (Education Science). August. Vol. 18 No. 4: 21-24.